

# *Roots in Ripon*

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*Chuck Roots*

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## The Scourge of the Century

Four decades ago the world was introduced to a medical terror the likes of which few other global alarms can even be compared. The scourge I'm writing about is HIV/Aids.

Let me ask you: When was the last time you read something about this dreaded disease? I'll bet you can't remember. It has virtually dropped off the radar screen when it comes to news reporting.

You may be asking me why I'm writing about this topic if it is no longer a blaring headline news story. That would be a fair and reasonable question. My answer is equally fair and reasonable. It is also direct. The scourge we know as HIV/Aids is still very much alive and well in our world. Please excuse the obvious oxymoron, "alive and well" in referencing this deadly, debilitating disease.

Recently, my wife and I were honored once again to be hosts in our home to our good friends, Dr. Tim and Muriel Teusink. These two Christian missionaries are simply amazing. Kinder, more godly people you will rarely find. They are home on furlough during which time they travel around North America visiting those churches and individuals who support them through finances and prayer.

I became acquainted with the Teusink's in early 2002 when I took a team of six from our church, the Ripon Free Methodist, to spend two weeks in Ethiopia. Our arrival in the capital city, Addis Ababa, coincided with the opening and dedication ceremony of three brand new medical clinics which would provide much needed health services for this beleaguered city of nearly three-and-a-half million. Dr. Tim Teusink was at the forefront of this advance in medical care.

Our intrepid team was welcomed into the Teusink's home and embraced as family, even though we had never met. After our two weeks were over, and we returned home to Ripon, as the pastor, I strongly encouraged (as did the others) that our church of 100 souls provide ongoing spiritual and financial support for the Teusink's missions work. Though I have been retired from church ministry for three years, I am pleased to announce that our church continues to support these folks.

During our recent visit, I asked Dr. Tim if I could interview him for an article for my "Roots in Ripon" column. He readily agreed. So, we sat and discussed his years of medical missions, with a driving question I had of just how he wound up immersed in HIV/Aids. To better understand this man and the reasons he felt God leading him into the field of medicine and missions work, you need to know that he

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came from a family of Christians who were strong in their faith. His parents wanted to be missionaries, but were unable to pursue this goal. Instead, his dad became a pastor with the Reformed Church of America in Holland, Michigan where Dr. Tim was born. They later moved to Washington State which has been home for Dr. Tim ever since.

Dr. Tim told me two things had a profound effect on him growing up. The first thing that made a lasting impression on him was the doctor who gave exceptional compassionate care to his brother who was suffering from cerebral palsy. The second thing that has had a life-long impact was the strong urging (or "calling", if you will) by God to follow a career in medicine, but more specifically, on the mission field. This was confirmed years later when he met Muriel (hailing from Canada) who also knew without a doubt that God was calling her to be a missionary. Her parents had also wanted to be missionaries. So, the die was cast for them both, you might say.

"I am not a visionary," Dr. Tim was quick to state. Instead, he expressed his desire to be faithful in what God has called him to do.

The Teusink's serve under the mission's organization known as SIM, formerly the Sudan Interior Mission, first established in 1893. In the 1980s, SIM's acronym became the Society for International Ministries, but is today better known as SIM. So great was the impact of SIM, that 40% of Africans today claim to be Christian.

In 1984, Dr. Tim was sent to the nation of Rwanda in Africa. It was here that HIV/Aids first became an issue for him, facing the reality of a populace of 25%-30% infected. Routinely performing surgeries, he was acutely aware of the growing concern of this new virus that was beginning to infect and kill people at an alarming rate. Little was known about it, even in the world of medicine. Dr. Tim was a young husband and father, so he grew increasingly concerned with the possibility of infecting his own family due to his constant contact with Rwandans carrying the virus. He wrestled with this problem until God made it clear to him that he was to continue in his medical practice and leave the welfare of him and his family to God's sovereignty. He continued with surgeries for the next four years, dealing with the nearly daily needle pricks from infected patients.

It is because of this close proximity to HIV/Aids infected patients that Dr. Tim has become a recognized authority on this scourge, being named "Missionary of the Year" in 2012 by the Christian Medical & Dental Society. He continues to travel throughout the world, but primarily in Africa, teaching bioethics to medicos and other health professionals as to the best ways to treat those afflicted with HIV/Aids and its prevention.

Please pray for Dr. Tim and Muriel Teusink as they continue to honor God through their life's work and passion, battling the scourge of the century.